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Appendix A: Interim Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Introduction

The following Interim Comprehensive Conservation Plan (ICCP) was developed as a general guideline for how the proposed Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge would be managed over the course of the next several years until a full plan can be completed. The ICCP does not present extensive detail about where facilities would be located, the timing of restoration actions, hunting opportunities, etc. All of these details would be a part of a future Comprehensive Conservation Plan developed with public input and in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and Service policies. However, this ICCP does attempt to answer some basic questions that may be posed by area landowners and others about future refuge management. Please see the Environmental Assessment for more details about the study area and existing land uses.

The proposed 35,750-acre Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge would eventually restore at least 13,000 acres of drained wetland basins and nearly 15,000 acres of tallgrass prairie habitat. The restored land would provide important breeding habitat for waterfowl, sandhill cranes, shorebirds and prairie chickens. The project would also improve water quality for local fisheries and decrease downstream flooding. The land would be managed to benefit wildlife as well as people.

Goals of the proposed Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge:

- Strive to maintain diversity and increase abundance of waterfowl and other migratory bird species dependent on prairie wetland and grassland habitats.
- Conserve, manage, and restore the diversity and viability of native fish, wildlife and plant populations associated with tallgrass prairie and prairie wetlands.
- Work in partnership with others to restore or enhance native tallgrass prairie, prairie wetlands and unique plant communities.
- Restore, enhance, and protect water quality and quantity that approaches natural hydrologic functions.
- Provide for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses by the public, emphasizing increased public understanding of the northern tallgrass prairie ecosystem and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Refuge Management

Refuge management refers to all aspects of refuge operations including habitat restoration, equipment, personnel, facility maintenance and visitor services.

A. Water Management

The natural hydrology and ecological dynamics of the study area have been changed during recent years to facilitate agriculture production. A series of large judicial ditches and drainage tile lines have been installed throughout the area. The result of draining the wetland basins between the glacial ridges is a loss in biological diversity and natural integrity of the landscape.

Water management is a crucial component of refuge habitat management. Generally, water management involves restoring historic wetland basins and controlling water levels. Artificial control by humans can mimic the natural cycles to promote habitat for all living creatures. The conversion of agriculture fields to restored wetlands is accomplished by using the same equipment that was used to drain the wet areas for agriculture. Ditches are filled, tile lines are plugged or removed and water control structures are installed.

The Service proposes to eventually restore all of the natural wetland basins within the refuge boundaries. Restorations may also occur on adjoining land with the permission of landowners or through a cooperative effort. It is our intent to have no impact on drainage from neighboring lands and to follow state laws regarding drainage activities. Restoration work may require close coordination with adjacent landowners and drainage districts.

B. Upland Management

Upland found on the proposed refuge includes grasslands, shrublands, croplands and small woodlots. Maintaining the existing native grasslands and restoring former prairies will be a primary focus of future land managers. Service refuge managers and biologists have extensive backgrounds in restoring and enhancing these types of landscapes for wildlife and their habitats. Habitat diversity will ultimately be addressed to ensure healthy populations of wildlife, especially the declining species of grassland birds and animals. A mosaic of habitats comprised of restored native prairie grasslands, wetlands, shrub areas, as well as croplands will serve wildlife a bounty of food, water, shelter, and space.

Grasslands are restored by planting a mixture of native grass seeds and forbs. This mixture may include species such as big and little blue stem, switchgrass, side-oats gramma, Indian grass, black-eyed susans, cone flowers and prairie clover. Burning, haying and grazing are all common methods used to maintain a native prairie grassland. Prescribed fire is an especially useful tool to stimulate native prairie grasses, reduce woody and undesirable vegetation, and “setback” ecological succession.

Currently, pasture and croplands, including cultivated row crop fields, alfalfa, and agricultural lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, encompass over 80% of the study area. The cultivated fields are planted primarily to soybeans or wheat. Additional tracts of tallgrass prairie have been cleared of boulders to facilitate future cultivation. In addition, a few wooded areas are scattered throughout the study area; mostly on state lands. Although most refuge uplands would be managed as grassland some shrub and tree cover will remain on the landscape. Native shrub and tree cover will be encouraged and maintained along flowing water courses to provide shade and protect against bank erosion.

C. Maintenance of Current Drainage Patterns

It is Service policy not to impede the flow of waters from other lands, even if such flow passes through refuge lands. The Service's intent is to have no impact on drainage from neighboring lands and to follow state laws regarding drainage activities. Service staff work with adjacent landowners and drainage districts to ensure that existing drainage

facilities or patterns are not negatively impacted by refuge activity. Detailed hydrologic designing will be undertaken for all water-related activities on Service lands to ensure that our activities do not alter drainage in any way that would cause flooding or drainage problems to private lands.

The Service would not cause any artificial increase of the natural level, width, or flow of waters without ensuring that the impact would be limited to lands in which we have acquired an appropriate real estate interest from a willing seller (e.g., fee title ownership, flowage easement, cooperative agreement). The Service would comply with all Federal and state regulations regarding development, some of which are specifically intended to ensure that the actions of one landowner do not adversely affect another. If Service activities inadvertently created a water-related problem for any private landowner (flooding, soil saturation or deleterious increase in water table height, etc.) the problem would be corrected at the agency's expense.

Through the Partner's for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Service has restored over 10,000 wetland in the Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region, which includes Minnesota. The expertise gained through this experience and by coordinating with partners in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and others, will help us achieve the wetland goals of this refuge and not adversely effect others. The Service will coordinate any management activities that may effect the current drainage pattern with county boards or the drainage district. Drainage districts are local government districts, which are organized to drain lands for agriculture or other purposes. Land is drained by drainage ditches which cross individual property boundaries. Landowners in a district who benefit from drainage must pay assessments to cover the cost of constructing, maintaining, and repairing the drainage system.

D. Fire Management and Fire Suppression

Fire has been a part of natural ecosystems since the origin of plant communities on earth. Fire management is a useful tool for managers to stimulate native prairie grasses, reduce woody and undesirable vegetation, and "setback" ecological succession. The role of fire has proven itself when alternative management tools are environmentally unacceptable (example: chemical treatments), are not effective, or are too expensive. Safety aspects of using prescribed fire are uppermost on everyone's minds. For this reason, biologists and managers are extensively trained and use special equipment for any prescribed fire or controlled burning. Staffed refuges have their own fire equipment including such items as pumper units, hand tools, drip torches and radio systems. Fire management plans specify the parameters for who, when, why, where, and how the burn will be conducted. Smoke management and contingency plans are described in detail. Every effort for the protection of life and property is made during planning and fire activities.

Wildfires, on the other hand, are unplanned fires that are caused by lightening strikes, railroads, humans, etc. that require quick response from professional fire fighters. The fire management plan addresses wildfire initial attack and incident response. Cooperative agreements coordinated with local and volunteer fire departments are arranged before a need arises.

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement is a cooperative effort by several agencies. Some Service employees are trained and commissioned to conduct law enforcement duties on Federal property and enforce certain Federal laws. This enforcement activity is primarily focused on the protection of refuge fish and wildlife resources, and on the protection of refuge visitors and their possessions from disturbance or harm by other visitors or themselves. The Service also relies on the cooperative law enforcement efforts of state conservation officers and county sheriff departments.

Refuge Administration

The proposed Glacial Ridge NWR could be administered in several ways depending on the pace of refuge development. In beginning stages, the new refuge could be managed administratively as a satellite refuge by an existing national wildlife refuge (Rydell) or wetland management district (Detroit Lakes WMD). As the restored land base increases, the complexity of habitat management and administration also increases, and the new refuge would probably be assigned its own funding, equipment, and staff. Speaking very generally, a fully staffed refuge of this size could eventually have about seven staff members and an annual operating budget of approximately \$700,000.

Public Use Opportunities and Management

The following is a discussion of potential recreational opportunities that may be available to the public if the proposed refuge becomes a reality. In this interim plan, we do not describe public use activities in detail, or pinpoint exact locations of facilities or access points that will be needed to facilitate public uses. Rather, this discussion will paint a general picture of the kinds of activities the public can expect to enjoy. Decisions about exact locations for facilities and programs will be made with public input, and will be described in detail in the future Comprehensive Conservation Plan. As on all National Wildlife Refuges, before any public use can be allowed on the proposed Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, the use must first be determined to be compatible with the refuge's purposes. These use-specific compatibility determination will be made as part of subsequent refuge management plans. A pre-acquisition compatibility determination has been prepared as a part of the environmental assessment.

While National Wildlife Refuges are managed first and foremost for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, through careful planning and regulation, refuges can provide the public with a variety of diverse and rewarding opportunities for wildlife dependent recreation. Wildlife-dependent recreation, as defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-57), includes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation. These are the priority public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and of the proposed Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge. Through participation in these activities, visitors to the refuge will gain an appreciation for healthy habitats and the fish and wildlife populations they support.

Trapping, while not a priority wildlife-dependent recreational activity, is often a practical wildlife management tool used on many refuges. Populations of beaver, muskrat and other mammals can exceed the carrying capacity of available habitat or cause damage to water control structures. Trapping is one means that could be used to control their numbers. Before we would allow any public trapping on the refuge, we would prepare a Furbearer Management Plan with the public's involvement.

A. Hunting

Following completion of a Refuge Hunt Plan it is expected that hunting for small and big game would occur on much of the refuge. The planning is expected to be completed prior to any land acquisition, so hunting could be permitted as soon as sufficient lands and public access points are acquired. Hunter access parking lots could be located at several convenient and safe locations. Information and regulation signs would be posted at these access points. Accessible hunting blinds may be developed to make hunting accessible for hunters with mobility disabilities. Annual deer hunts will probably be necessary to prevent an overabundance of deer on the refuge. Depending on the level of hunter interest, and potential for crowding, the refuge may institute a permit system to assure safe and enjoyable hunter experiences. The refuge would cooperate with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in the establishment of hunting seasons and permit quotas as needed.

Waterfowl hunting opportunities are also very likely to be provided on much of the refuge. As we prepare a detailed Hunt Plan, we will identify which areas of the refuge would be open to migratory bird hunting, and identify parking and access points necessary to facilitate this use. However, the entire refuge would not be open at all times during the waterfowl hunting season. Federal law generally prohibits us from opening over 40% of a National Wildlife Refuge (acquired with the approval of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission) to migratory bird hunting. The progress of wetland restoration, hunter access, bird numbers and habitat use will ultimately determine the areas open to hunting.

B. Fishing

The restored shallow wetland basins within the refuge will probably not support large populations of game fish. However, there may be some fishing potential and public desire to fish on refuge waters. Following completion of a Refuge Sport Fishing Plan fishing opportunities would be provided at suitable locations. The planning will be completed as soon as fish-bearing waters and public access points are acquired. The refuge staff would cooperate with the Minnesota DNR in all aspects of fishery improvements and restoration efforts.

C. Wildlife Observation & Photography

The refuge will contain scenic vistas of a vast prairie landscape. Wildlife inhabiting the restored habitats will include waterfowl, cranes, shorebirds and song birds. The combination of diverse wildlife and landscape beauty will create excellent wildlife observation and photography opportunities at several sites around the refuge.

Short hiking trails (with boardwalks as needed) and wildlife observation platforms and blinds would also be developed to immerse visitors into the tallgrass prairie landscape and wetland areas of the refuge.

The refuge staff would work with local communities and private conservation groups to develop special public wildlife celebrations, like International Migratory Bird Day, or Sandhill Crane celebrations. These events will help build community awareness and pride in the refuge and help provide an additional draw of visitors to the area.

D. Interpretation

The major interpretive themes for the proposed Glacial Ridge Refuge include these concepts: the tallgrass prairie ecosystem; the refuge's habitat restoration and management; the refuge's place in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

These themes will be the core messages of the refuge's interpretive program, and will be included in different forms of interpretive signs, leaflets, and exhibits.

Visitor Contact Station

A visitor contact station could be developed on the refuge, near a main highway access. This modest sized facility would contain information and exhibits about the refuge. This will be the first stop for most first time visitors. Space will be provided for: refuge staff; refuge orientation displays; interpretive exhibits and diorama's of local wildlife; an information desk; restrooms; a multipurpose room; and small interpretive bookstore sales area. Possible partnerships with local conservation groups and other state and Federal conservation agencies could allow this visitor contact station to serve as an information station for people interested in learning about other wildlife and natural resources of the Glacial Ridge area.

Interpretive Wayside

Interpretive signs will be provided at the key wildlife observation areas, and hiking trails. These signs will reinforce the refuge's interpretive themes and provide site specific information that will help the visitor appreciate the refuge's resources.

Interpretive Trail

During a more thorough refuge planning and site analysis, process sites will be identified for the development of interpretive loop trails. These trails would include interpretive signs, or leaflets, keyed to landscape and wildlife features.

Environmental Education

The refuge staff will seek partnerships with local school districts, state and local organizations to provide site-based learning about conservation, and the restoration of habitat for wildlife and people. Outdoor classroom sites would be developed for the delivery of environmental education lessons and activities. Partnership projects could include hosting teacher workshops and youth leader programs. Activities would be coordinated closely with local schools to be sure any activities offered by the refuge would assist the teachers/students with meeting graduation standards or required curriculum components.

Wilderness Review

Lands within the proposed boundaries of the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge have been reviewed for wilderness suitability as part of the ICCP process. No lands were found suitable for designation as Wilderness as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964. The study area does not presently contain 5,000 contiguous roadless acres nor does the proposed refuge have any units of sufficient size to make their preservation practicable as Wilderness. The lands of the refuge have been substantially affected by humans, particularly through agriculture.

Refuge Regulations and Enforcement

Because the proposed Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, like the other 500+ existing refuges, are places where the needs of wildlife come first, some general public uses allowed on other public lands are not appropriate on a refuge, and will not be allowed. The following regulations are typical of most National Wildlife Refuges and are published in the Code of Federal Regulations:

- Vehicles are only allowed on designated roads.
- Camping is not allowed.
- Camp or cooking fires are not allowed.
- Some wildlife sensitive areas may be seasonally closed to all public entry and use.
- Horseback riding on refuge trails is not allowed.
- Snowmobiles on refuge trails are not allowed.
- Refuge use is limited to daylight hours only.
- Possession or discharge of firearms is prohibited except during established hunting seasons in areas open to hunting.
- Dogs and pets must be kept on leash (except while hunting).
- Disturbing or collecting plants or animals is prohibited except under special permit.
- Searching for, or removal of objects of antiquity or historical importance is not allowed except under permit.

The enforcement of refuge regulations is important to safeguard resources and to protect visitors. Two or more refuge staff generally have law enforcement authority and work in close cooperation with state conservation officers, and other local enforcement agencies.

Appendix A1: Interim Compatibility Determination

INTERIM COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

I. STATION NAME: Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge

II. DATE ESTABLISHED: Not yet established.

III. ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY: Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 715-715r, as amended) and the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-645)

IV. PURPOSE FOR WHICH ESTABLISHED: The primary purpose for the Refuge under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act is “for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”

V. DESCRIPTION OF USE: Wildlife-dependent recreational activities currently are limited within the 35,700 acre study area. Nearly 25,000 acres of land is used for intensive agricultural purposes including growing row crops and grazing livestock. These large expanses of tilled and grazed land do not provide for concentrated use by wildlife. Wildlife observation, photography, environmental interpretation and hunting opportunities are available and occur on the three state wildlife management areas within the area. The Nature Conservancy's Pembina Trail Preserve is also used by the public for all of these purposes except hunting. Fishing opportunities are very limited to non-existent within the study area but the proposed wetland restorations may improve this situation. The county and township roads provide access for local bird watchers. A small number of bird enthusiasts drive through the area during the spring and fall migration periods.

The same wildlife-dependent uses are being considered for lands acquired for the refuge. Hunting will be conducted within the framework of applicable state and Federal regulations. No permit systems are being considered at this time since limited hunting pressure will essentially be self-regulated. Control of deer numbers through hunting will support commitments to minimize crop damage from increased wildlife numbers.

Existing wildlife-dependent uses will be continued and promoted to help realize the refuge goal of increasing opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. All refuge lands, except those sensitive communities identified as requiring exclusion of use, will be open to recreational uses year-round. Hunting and fishing would occur within state-established seasons. Wildlife recreational use will help promote understanding, appreciation and support for wetland and prairie restoration and other conservation efforts.

VI. ESTIMATE DEMAND FOR PRE-EXISTING WILDLIFE-DEPENDENT RECREATIONAL USE PLUS OTHER WILDLIFE-DEPENDENT RECREATIONAL USES CONSIDERED IF LANDS BECOME REFUGE DOMAIN: Demand for the existing wildlife-dependent recreational uses described above should increase significantly if subject lands are acquired for a refuge. The availability and increased accessibility of refuge lands is widely known within the region. Waterfowl and deer hunting opportunities and demand should increase as wetlands and grasslands are restored. There also should be a significant increase in the number of non-consumptive users for such activities as wildlife photography and wildlife viewing. Preserving and restoring a more pristine

prairie/wetland environment will directly and indirectly improve conditions and demand for wildlife and related outdoor activity.

The completed project could attract 70,000 day visitors per year (based on visitation rates at similar sites). These visitor days are in addition to what exist under baseline conditions. Increased demands would result through local community organizations desiring additional tourism revenues. Partnerships between the Service and these organizations could be established to develop and promote compatible recreational opportunities.

VII. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSED USE/EXISTING USE ON REFUGE PURPOSE:

The continuation of existing wildlife-dependent recreational use is consistent with fish and wildlife management principals in that it recognizes, in the case of hunting, the concepts of harvestable surplus and carrying capacity. White-tailed deer and Canada goose numbers can increase to levels causing increased cropland damage without the control provided by hunting. The potential of floral and faunal degradation reduces biodiversity and negatively impacts other wildlife using the same habitat, including threatened and endangered species. The refuge goal to maintain diversity and increase abundance of waterfowl and other migratory bird species could be impaired without an active hunting program to manage big game and predator populations.

VIII. STIPULATIONS THAT WOULD MAKE PROPOSED USE/EXISTING USE COMPATIBLE WITH REFUGE PURPOSE:

All hunting activities will be in conformance with applicable state and Federal regulations.

Sensitive or rare plant communities may be excluded from consideration of public recreational use on limited acreage if that use would severely damage or extirpate the natural community type.

Wildlife-dependent uses will be subject to modification if on-site monitoring uncovers unanticipated negative impacts to natural communities, wildlife species or their habitats.

IX. JUSTIFICATION: Recreation, including hunting and fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation has minimal impact on refuge resources and is a positive result of proper wetland and prairie restoration. These proposed wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities would generate increased public support for the Service's biological and land acquisition programs. People, when able to experience the outdoors, become more understanding and appreciative of habitat protection and restoration needs.

X. FUNDING OR STAFFING CONSTRAINTS TO IMPLEMENTATION: The Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge could be administered in several ways depending on the pace of refuge development. In beginning stages, the new refuge would probably be managed as a satellite refuge by staff of the nearby Rydell NWR and/or Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District. As the restored land base increases, the complexity of habitat management and administration also increases, and the new refuge would probably be assigned its own funding, equipment, and staff. Speaking very generally, a fully staffed refuge of this size could eventually have about seven staff members and an annual operating budget of approximately \$700,000.

Available from the Service?

Yes

No

Discuss: The need for increased refuge administrative funding is dependent on the pace of land acquisition and development. The initial costs to support wildlife-dependent uses should be low as wildlife habitats are slowly restored over time.

If no, is it available from Service partners?

Yes

No

Discuss: Partner matching grants and cooperatively funded projects and programs would be an integral part of implementation.

XI. DETERMINATION IF USE IS OR IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE PURPOSE(S) FOR WHICH THE REFUGE WAS OR WILL BE ESTABLISHED:

IS IS NOT

XII. WILL THE USE BE ALLOWED AFTER ACQUISITION: YES NO

Discussion: See Sections V, VII & VIII.

s/Gary Muehlenhardt
Determined By (Project Leader):

s/James T. Leach
Reviewed By (RS):

s/Tom Worthington
Concurred By (Chief, NWRS):

4/2/01
Date

4/6/01
Date

4/9/01
Date

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

Planning a New or Expanded National Wildlife Refuge: Frequently Asked Questions

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the primary federal agency responsible for conserving the nation's migratory bird and fish species; protecting endangered plants and animals; and providing critical habitat for the diverse living resources that exist in the United States. The National Wildlife



Refuge System was established in 1903 and is a key part of achieving that mission as well as providing people with opportunities to enjoy natural environments that range from arctic tundra to coastal salt marshes, deserts and bottomland hardwood forests.

Public participation is a vital part of the Service's refuge planning process. Environmental documents such as Environmental Assessments are prepared when a new refuge is proposed or an expansion to an existing refuge is considered, and many opportunities for involvement by residents, elected officials, business representatives and local, regional and state agencies are built into the environmental documentation process.

The purpose of creating new refuges and expanding existing refuges is to preserve wildlife, plants and their habitat for the benefit of everyone. At the same time, we appreciate the concerns voiced by many communities about refuge planning and what it means to land owners, rural communities, agriculture, hunting and fishing, and local government. This list of frequently asked questions is based on questions asked during refuge planning projects throughout Region 3 (which includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Missouri). These questions and answers are general in scope; you

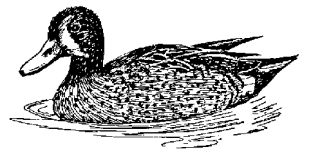
will have many opportunities to ask questions about specific refuge projects throughout the planning process.

Why locate a national wildlife refuge here?: A number of factors go into determining locations for new wildlife refuges. Generally, the Service looks at areas with significant wildlife values or the potential for restoration of wildlife values to an area. In many cases a proposal is seeking to fill a void in habitat availability for a group of species of federal interest or for a significant single species, such as an endangered species. For example, an area may provide outstanding habitat for grassland-dependant birds, which is a group of migratory birds that has seen consistently declining populations over the past several years. The Service may be considering a particular location because it has great potential for meeting other established objectives, such as providing environmental education opportunities.

Will my property be condemned?: Service policy is to acquire land only from willing sellers.

If I do not choose to sell my land, will my rights as a property owner be infringed as a result of the refuge designation?:

No. If a refuge is established, the Service will have no more authority over private land within or adjacent to the boundaries of the refuge than any other landowner.



Is buying land the only option?: There are a number of alternatives for achieving the natural resource goals of a proposed refuge. Resource preservation and restoration options include cooperative agreements, easements and landowner

technical assistance. The Service is eager to work with landowners to find an alternative that is acceptable to them and that contributes to refuge objectives.

How will the creation of a wildlife refuge affect the area's tax base?: The Service tries to alleviate the impact of wildlife refuges on state and local taxes by reimbursing local governments for lost tax revenues. The formula that generally

yields the highest return for a local unit of government is \$7.50 per \$1,000 of the property's fair market value. Several states have programs that also supplement payments to local school districts if the tax base declines due to the acquisition of public land.



What is the economic impact of a refuge on a community?: In many cases, refuges actually draw people into the community, generating income for tourist-oriented businesses and services. *Banking on Nature*, the Service's study of the economic benefits of refuges, found that nationally visitors contribute more than \$400 million every year to local economics. The publication reports that in 1995 non-resident funds generated at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois totaled \$3.29 million in the Marion, Ill., region and 76 additional jobs were created. Non-resident refuge visitors spent about \$1.8 million in the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge area in central Wisconsin in 1995, according to *Banking on Nature*, and 41 jobs were added in the area.

Will drainage be changed in a way that affects my property?: The Service's intent is to have no impact on drainage from neighboring lands and to follow state laws regarding drainage activities. Service staff work with adjacent landowners and drainage districts to ensure that existing drainage facilities or patterns are not negatively impacted by refuge activity.

Who is responsible for controlling noxious weeds on refuge property?: The Service's policy is to control plants listed as noxious weeds by States. This control uses non-chemical methods when possible and chemical treatments when necessary to prevent noxious weeds from spreading to adjacent private farmland.

When and how can I express my opinions about the proposal?: You can express an opinion anytime and there are a number of ways to do so. You can talk to Service personnel at one of the several public open house events that will be scheduled throughout the course of this project, or you can schedule a one-on-one meeting with Service staff to discuss the refuge proposal. If you have access to the Internet, you can address e-mail to: r3planning@fws.gov at anytime. You can obtain more information and make comments about this project and others that are under way at: <http://midwest.fws.gov/planning>

A refuge boundary has been established for a wildlife refuge proposal before public participation or final approval; does what I have to say about that boundary matter, or is it a done deal?:

It is not a done deal, and what you have to say about the proposed boundary will be considered in the proposal evaluation process. The Service's Regional Offices are required to establish a tentative study area before an evaluation can be initiated. These initial boundaries are flexible and, if the project is approved, the actual area proposed could be smaller or larger than the initial proposal reflects.



If the refuge is established, is the planning process the only opportunity I will have to provide input into what goes on at the refuge?: Community involvement is important to the success of a wildlife refuge. The Service encourages public participation in developing detailed management plans for the refuge. Many refuges have citizen groups that support the refuge through actively participating in refuge activities and operations.

Some people contend that the Service is destroying farmland when land is taken out of agricultural production and restored as wetlands, grasslands or other habitat; how do you respond?: Acquiring land as a national wildlife refuge protects it from development. If the nation's lawmakers someday decide it is needed for agricultural production, it will be there. The soil will actually rebuild itself when indigenous vegetative cover is restored; on the other hand, development can degrade soil and extensive commercial or dense residential development makes it very unlikely that the land will ever be restored to agricultural purposes in the future.

Is a federal refuge automatically closed to hunting, fishing and other recreational activities?: Not necessarily. The alternatives considered in refuge planning are mandated by Congress (Public Law 105-57, Oct. 9, 1997) to allow compatible wildlife-dependent recreational public uses such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation. Goals and objectives are identified for the refuge (with public input), and the specific public uses are determined based on their consistency with the objectives established for the refuge. A refuge that serves as production areas for a federally endangered species is likely to offer less access for people during periods when the endangered species is present than at other times of the year. In Region 3, 88 percent of the refuges offer public recreational opportunities. Those that are closed include small islands or caves where endangered species or colonial nesting birds are present.

Where does funding for land acquisition for wildlife refuges come from?: Typically, money to acquire land for national refuges comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund or the Migratory Bird Fund, both of which were established through federal law. The Land and Water Conservation Fund primarily includes the sale of products on federal land, such as offshore oil and gas leases. The Migratory Bird Fund is derived from the sale of federal duck stamps.

Why is the federal government involved in planning wildlife refuges? Why shouldn't states manage their own refuges?: Wildlife and habitat simply do not conform to state boundaries, and neither does citizen investment in the nation's natural resources. For example, preserving migratory waterfowl habitat requires a comprehensive approach because flight patterns for particular species can extend across the entire length of the country. Conservation practices in one state would be jeopardized or even nullified by lesser efforts in another state along the flight pattern. Citizenship too extends beyond state lines, and we all have an investment in preserving this country's unique or endangered species and habitats regardless of where we live. While state departments of natural resources are responsible for managing the bulk of wildlife and habitat issues; federal involvement in refuge planning reflects this broader public interest.

How can you properly manage another refuge if you already have a maintenance backlog on existing refuges?: National wildlife refuges are not approved overnight, as this brochure suggests. If a wildlife refuge proposal is ultimately approved, the Service's policy of only buying land from willing sellers means that it may be years before there is enough contiguous land for a refuge to be viable. The Service continues to make progress on decreasing its maintenance backlog, but a great deal of habitat could be lost to development or further degradation if we did not get the ball rolling now.

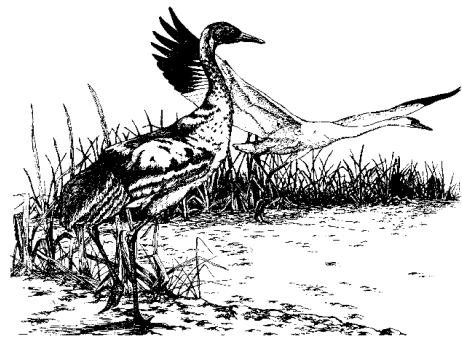


Who will run the refuge if it is established?: It might be assigned its own staff and budget, however if there is an existing refuge station nearby, staff from that refuge might be assigned to run it.

How can I find out more about the National Wildlife Refuge System?: Region 3 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be happy to send

you additional information on national refuge planning. You can request information by writing to us at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ascertainment and Planning, 1 Federal Drive, Ft. Snelling, MN 55111; or by calling toll free 1-800-247-1247.

What happens next if a national refuge is ultimately approved? Several steps will follow the approval of a new refuge. First, funding must be obtained through congressional action and a national budget ranking process. Second, the refuge is formally established when fee title or an easement interest is acquired in a piece of land within the approved boundary. Finally, detailed management planning in the form of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) will provide future management direction. With public input, the CCP establishes definite goals and objectives for the refuge and identifies specific strategies for achieving those goals. Specific issues, such as cleaning up a contaminated area, the presence of an endangered species or managing an overabundant deer herd, are addressed in separate, step-down plans. The CCP also identifies an implementation and monitoring plan, and progress toward the goals and strategies are reviewed on a regular basis.



Appendix C: Land Protection Plan

Options for Fish and Wildlife Habitats

This Land Protection Plan presents habitat protection and restoration options available to the Service and landowners on public and private lands within the proposed refuge boundary. A map of relative protection priorities for areas within the proposed refuge is included (**Figure 1**).

I. Options for Land Protection

Land protection options vary from written agreements on land management to outright purchase of the land. Land may be acquired in fee title by several methods including exchange, purchase or donation. Conservation or non-development easements can also be purchased by the Service or donated by a landowner. Each parcel of land has unique resource values and circumstances that determine the desired level of protection.

Much of the public discussion and/or concern over a new refuge proposal centers on full acquisition of lands (fee title). However, land purchase is only one of many options for developing a wildlife refuge. Various options for habitat protection and restoration could be used in concert with fee title acquisition to achieve refuge goals.

Fee Simple Purchase

The Service could purchase land from willing sellers within the proposed refuge boundary. The land would be appraised at market value and a written offer presented to a landowner. Full rights and title to purchased property would be vested with the United States as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Land acquisition funds are limited and allocated on a nationwide basis. Each Service Region must compete for appropriations from Congress under the Land and Water Conservation Fund and for Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp) allotments. Annual land acquisition funding cannot be assured for each refuge requesting it.

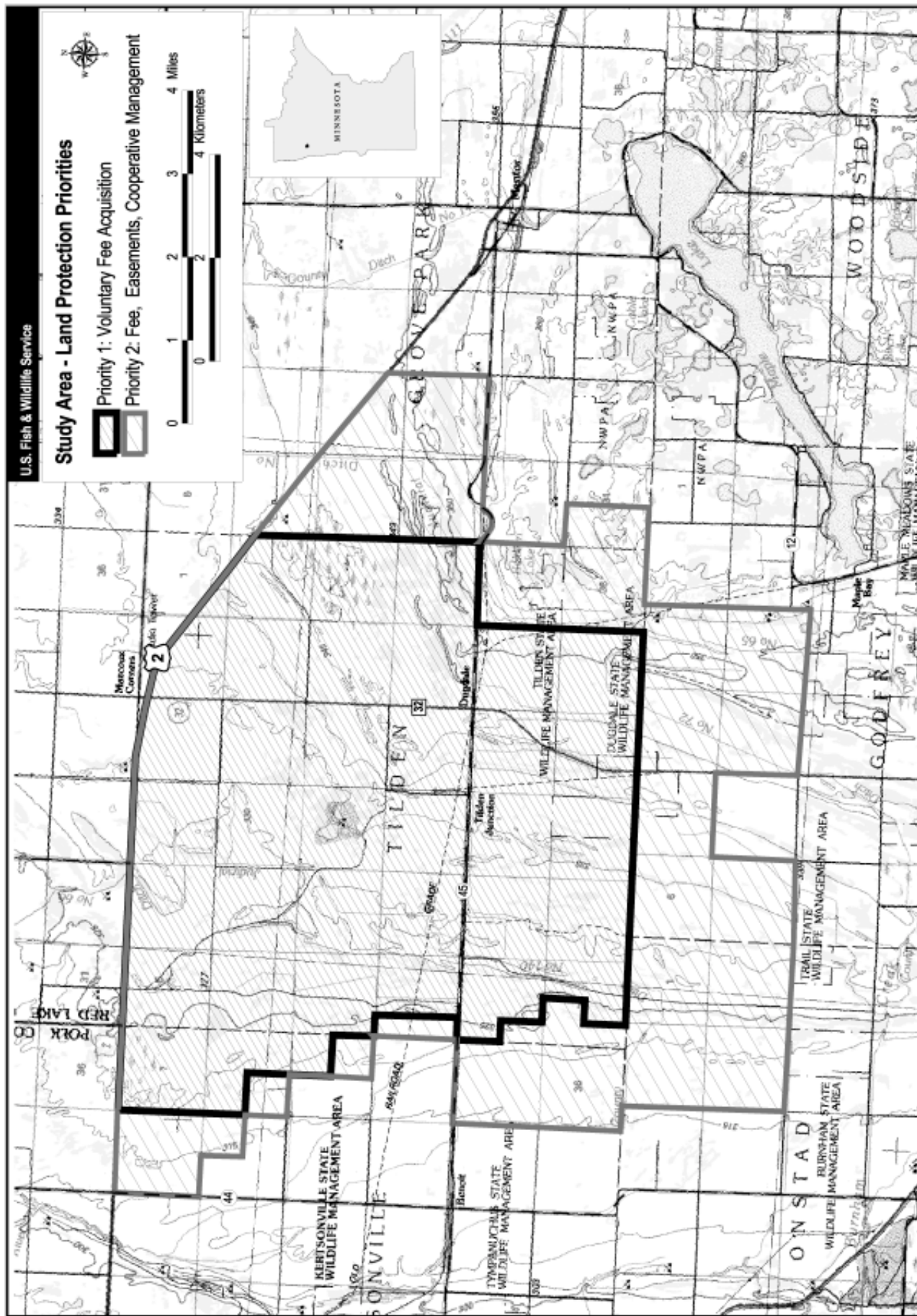
Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are a popular method for land protection used by private individuals, land trusts and governments. Conservation easements involve the acquisition of specific land rights for the purpose of achieving defined habitat objectives. Easements can either prohibit or encourage certain practices. For example, wetland easements usually involve the right to drain, burn and fill a wetland. Grassland easements usually cover the right to place timing restrictions on hay mowing to benefit wildlife. Easements become part of the title to the property and are usually permanent. If a landowner sells the property, the easement continues as part of the title.

Study Area - Land Protection Priorities

Priority 1: Voluntary Fee Acquisition

Priority 2: Fee, Easements, Cooperative Management



II. Options for Habitat Restoration

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

This program is administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and offers technical and financial assistance to private landowners to voluntarily restore wetlands, native grasslands and other fish and wildlife habitats. The Service, along with a wide variety of partners, provides assistance and cost-sharing to complete work if the landowner agrees to maintain the area for a period of 10 years or more. Partners who contribute time and funds for these efforts include local conservation organizations, universities, businesses, school groups, other government agencies and private individuals.

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. The program focuses on providing financial incentives to landowners in exchange for wetland restoration or enhancements. Three options are available: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements for a minimum 10-year duration. The landowner retains title to the land and may lease it for hunting and fishing. Additional activities, such as haying, grazing or timber cutting may be permitted if the uses are fully consistent with protection and enhancement of the wetland.

Technical Assistance

Several programs exist for people who want to improve wildlife habitat on their land. Financial assistance for habitat improvements is often available on a cost-sharing basis.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Participants work with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to prepare a wildlife habitat development plan in consultation with the local conservation district. The plan describes the landowner's goals for habitat improvement and sets a schedule for implementation. Cost-share agreements under this program generally last from 5 to 10 years.

Cooperative Agreements

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can offer free technical assistance to neighboring property owners through a cooperative agreement. The Service can agree to develop wildlife or land management plans, or do wildlife surveys on private lands and provide detailed information to the landowners. These cooperative agreements are formal, written documents, and usually place no legally binding restrictions on the land. No money is involved and either party may cancel the agreement with adequate notice to the other party. A cooperative agreement would not affect the tax status of the land.

Private Conservation Efforts

In recent years, conservation organizations have been effective in promoting wildlife habitat improvement on private lands. Collectively, these local, regional or national organizations are a great source of financial and technical assistance for the private landowner who wishes to improve lands for wildlife. Some of the more popular organizations include The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Izaak Walton League, Audubon, Trust for Public Lands, Ducks Unlimited, and Pheasants Forever.

In addition, local hunting, fishing, and conservation organizations often are willing to assist private landowners with wildlife habitat improvement projects. Many of these organizations have substantial financial and technical resources and are often a dedicated source of energy for wildlife habitat improvement on both private and public lands.

III. Recommended Land Protection Levels

The Environmental Assessment recommends Alternative C, which includes a Core Restoration area and a larger Restoration Enhancement area. The goal for the Core Restoration area would be to gradually acquire fee or easements on the lands over the course of 10 years. Any fee or easement purchases would be from willing sellers only. If a landowner is not interested in a fee title sale, the Service would consider other options such as conservation easements or assistance with private conservation measures if these were of interest to the landowner.

The approach for the adjacent Restoration Enhancement (Priority 2) area would be to acquire fee or permanent easements on most lands within the boundary over the course of 10 or more years. During the interim, a combination of easements, fee title or private conservation measures would be pursued based on each landowners' interest. The Service would not seek to acquire the State lands already managed for wildlife habitat. Instead, we would like to work in concert with State land managers to enhance wildlife habitat measures on federal and state lands.

IV. Land Protection Priorities

The Core Restoration area is the Service's highest priority (Priority 1) for purchase and restoration with future available funding. The Restoration Enhancement addition would be the second highest priority for fee purchase and conservation easements (Priority 2).

Appendix D: Legal Compliance

Appendix D: Legal Compliance

The following laws and executive orders apply to planning, land acquisition and management on national wildlife refuges:

Rivers and Harbor Act (1899) (33 U.S.C. 403): Section 10 of this Act requires the authorization by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to any work in, on, over, or under a navigable water of the United States.

Antiquities Act (1906): Authorizes the scientific investigation of antiquities on Federal land and provides penalties for unauthorized removal of objects taken or collected without a permit.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918): Designates the protection of migratory birds as a Federal responsibility. This Act enables the setting of seasons, and other regulations including the closing of areas, Federal or non-Federal, to the hunting of migratory birds.

Migratory Bird Conservation Act (1929): Establishes procedures for acquisition by purchase, rental, or gift of areas approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (1934) as amended: Requires that the Fish and Wildlife Service and State fish and wildlife agencies be consulted whenever water is to be impounded, diverted or modified under a Federal permit or license. The Service and State agency recommend measures to prevent the loss of biological resources, or to mitigate or compensate for the damage. The project proponent must take biological resource values into account and adopt justifiable protection measures to obtain maximum overall project benefits. A 1958 amendment added provisions to recognize the vital contribution of wildlife resources to the Nation and to require equal consideration and coordination of wildlife conservation with other water resources development programs. It also authorized the Secretary of Interior to provide public fishing areas and accept donations of lands and funds.

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (1934): Authorized the opening of part of a refuge to waterfowl hunting.

Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act (1935) as amended: Declares it a national policy to preserve historic sites and objects of national significance, including those located on refuges. Provides procedures for designation, acquisition, administration, and protection of such sites.

Refuge Revenue Sharing Act (1935) as amended: This act requires revenue sharing provisions to all fee-title ownerships that are administered solely or primarily by the Secretary through the Service.

Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife Conservation Purposes Act (1948): Provides that upon a determination by the Administrator of the General Services Administration, real property no longer needed by a Federal agency can be transferred without reimbursement to the Secretary of Interior if the land has particular value for migratory birds, or to a State agency for other wildlife conservation purposes.

Fish and Wildlife Act (1956): Established a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and broadened the authority for acquisition and development of refuges.

Refuge Recreation Act (1962): Allows the use of refuges for recreation when such uses are compatible with the refuge's primary purposes and when sufficient funds are available to manage the uses.

Wilderness Act (1964) as amended: Directed the Secretary of Interior, within 10 years, to review every roadless area of 5,000 or more acres and every roadless island (regardless of size) within National Wildlife Refuge and National Park Systems and to recommend to the President the suitability of each such area or island for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, with final decisions made by Congress. The Secretary of Agriculture was directed to study and recommend suitable areas in the National Forest System.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (1965): Uses the receipts from the sale of surplus Federal land, outer continental shelf oil and gas sales, and other sources for land acquisition under several authorities.

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (1966) as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (1997) 16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee. (Refuge Administration Act): Defines the National Wildlife Refuge System and authorizes the Secretary to permit any use of a refuge provided such use is compatible with the major purposes for which the refuge was established. The Refuge Improvement Act clearly defines a unifying mission for the Refuge System; establishes the legitimacy and appropriateness of the six priority public uses (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, or environmental education and interpretation); establishes a formal process for determining compatibility; established the responsibilities of the Secretary of Interior for managing and protecting the System; and requires a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for each refuge by the year 2012. This Act amended portions of the Refuge Recreation Act and National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966.

National Historic Preservation Act (1966) as amended: Establishes as policy that the Federal Government is to provide leadership in the preservation of the nation's prehistoric and historic resources.

National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997: Considered the "Organic Act" of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Act defines the mission of the System, designates priority wildlife-dependent public uses and calls for comprehensive refuge planning.

Architectural Barriers Act (1968): Requires federally owned, leased, or funded buildings and facilities to be accessible to persons with disabilities.

National Environmental Policy Act (1969): Requires the disclosure of the environmental impacts of any major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

Uniform Relocation and Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (1970) as amended: This Act provides for uniform and equitable treatment of persons who sell their homes, businesses, or farms to the Service. The Act requires that any purchase offer be no less than the fair market value of the property.

Endangered Species Act (1973): Requires all Federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species.

Rehabilitation Act (1973): Requires programmatic accessibility in addition to physical accessibility for all facilities and programs funded by the Federal government to ensure that anybody can participate in any program.

Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act (1974): Directs the preservation of historic and archaeological data in Federal construction projects.

Clean Water Act (1977): Requires consultation with the Corps of Engineers (404 permits) for major wetland modifications.

Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (1977) as amended (Public Law 95-87) (SMCRA): Regulates surface mining activities and reclamation of coal-mined lands. Further regulates the coal industry by designating certain areas as unsuitable for coal mining operations.

Executive Order 11988 (1977): Each Federal agency shall provide leadership and take action to reduce the risk of flood loss and minimize the impact of floods on human safety, and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by the floodplains.

Executive Order 11990. E.O. 11990 directs Federal agencies to (1) minimize destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and (2) preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands when a practical alternative exists.

Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs): In compliance, the Service will send copies of the Environmental Assessment to Iowa State Planning Agencies for review.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978): Directs agencies to consult with native traditional religious leaders to determine appropriate policy changes necessary to protect and preserve Native American religious cultural rights and practices.

Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act (1978): This act was passed to improve the administration of fish and wildlife programs and amends several earlier laws including the Refuge Recreation Act, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, and the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956. It authorizes the Secretary to accept gifts and bequests of real and personal property on behalf of the United States. It also authorizes the use of volunteers on Service projects and appropriations to carry out a volunteer program.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act (1979) as amended: Protects materials of archaeological interest from unauthorized removal or destruction and requires Federal managers to develop plans and schedules to locate archaeological resources.

Federal Farmland Protection Policy Act (1981) as amended: The purpose of the Act is to minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses.

Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (1986): The purpose of the Act is “To promote the conservation of migratory waterfowl and to offset or prevent the serious loss of wetlands by the acquisition of wetlands and other essential habitat, and for other purposes.”

Federal Noxious Weed Act (1990): Requires the use of integrated management systems to control or contain undesirable plant species, and an interdisciplinary approach with the cooperation of other Federal and State agencies.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990): Requires Federal agencies and museums to inventory, determine ownership of, and repatriate cultural items under their control or possession.

Americans With Disabilities Act (1992): Prohibits discrimination in public accommodations and services.

Federal Records Act of 1950.

Executive Order 13006 Use of Urban Historic Properties.

Executive Order 12898 (1994): Establishes environmental justice as a Federal government priority and directs all Federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their mission. Environmental justice calls for fair distribution of environmental hazards.

Executive Order 12996 Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System (1996): Defines the mission, purpose, and priority public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System. It also presents four principles to guide management of the System.

Executive Order 13007 Indian Sacred Sites (1996): Directs Federal land management agencies to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners, avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites, and where appropriate, maintain the confidentiality of sacred sites.

National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act (1998): Amends the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to promote volunteer programs and community partnerships for the benefit of national wildlife refuges, and for other purposes.

National Trails System Act: Assigns responsibility to the Secretary of Interior and thus the Service to protect the historic and recreational values of congressionally designated National Historic Trail sites.